

**Thomas Jefferson to William B. Giles, March 23, 1801,
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester
Ford.**

TO WILLIAM B. GILES J. MSS.

Washington, Mar. 23, 1801.

Dear Sir, —I received two days ago your favor of the 16th, and thank you for your kind felicitations on my election; but whether it will be a subject of felicitation, permanently, will be for the chapters of future history to say. The important subjects of the government I meet with some degree of courage and confidence, because I do believe the talents to be associated with me, the honest line of conduct we will religiously pursue at home and abroad, and the confidence of my fellow citizens dawning on us, will be equal to these objects.

But there is another branch of duty which I must meet with courage too, though I cannot without pain; that is, the appointments & disappointments as to offices. Madison & Gallatin being still absent, we have not yet decided on our rules of conduct as to these. That some ought to be removed from office, & that all ought not, all mankind will agree. But where to draw the line, perhaps no two will agree. Consequently, nothing like a general approbation on this subject can be looked for. Some principles have been the subject of conversation, but not of determination; *e. g.*, 1, all appointments to *civil* offices *during pleasure*, made after the event of the election was certainly known to Mr. A, are considered as nullities. I do not view the persons appointed as even candidates for the office, but make others without noticing or notifying them. Mr. A's best friends have agreed this is right. 2. Officers who have been guilty of *official* misconduct are proper subjects of removal. 3. Good men,

Library of Congress

to whom there is no objection but a difference of political principle, practised on only as far as the right of a private citizen will justify, are not proper subjects of removal, except in the case of attorneys & marshals. The courts being so decidedly federal & irremovable, it is believed that republican attorneys & marshals, being the doors of entrance into the courts, are indispensably necessary as a shield to the republican part of our fellow citizens, which, I believe, is the main body of the people.

These principles are yet to be considered of, and I sketch them to you in confidence. Not that there is objection to your mootting them as subjects of conversation, and as proceeding

from yourself, but not as matters of executive determination. Nay, farther, I will thank you for your own sentiments and those of others on them. If received before the 20th of April, they will be in time for our deliberation on the subject. You know that it was in the year X. Y. Z. that so great a transition from us to the other side took place, & with as real republicans as we were ourselves; that these, after getting over that delusion, have been returning to us, and that it is to that return we owe a triumph in 1800, which in 1799 would have been the other way. The week's suspension of the election before Congress, seems almost to have completed that business, and to have brought over nearly the whole remaining mass. They now find themselves with us, & separated from their quondam leaders. If we can but avoid shocking their feelings by unnecessary acts of severity against their late friends, they will in a little time cement & form one mass with us, & by these means harmony & union be restored to our country, which would be the greatest good we could effect. It was a conviction that these people did not differ from us in principle, which induced me to define the principles which I deemed orthodox, & to urge a reunion on those principles; and I am induced to hope it has conciliated many. I do not speak of the desperadoes of the quondam faction in & out of Congress. These I consider as incurables, on whom all attentions would be lost, & therefore will not be wasted. But my wish is, to keep their flock from returning to them.

Library of Congress

On the subject of the marshal of Virginia, I refer you confidentially to Majr Egglestone for information. I leave this about this day se'nnight, to make some arrangements at home preparatory to my final removal to this place, from which I shall be absent about three weeks.